Appln. No. 09/234,695
Amendment dated April 1, 2004
Reply to Office Action mailed December 1, 2003

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims (deleted text being struck through and added text being underlined):

1. through 16. (Cancelled)

17. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for processing signals related to trading shifts between employees, the method comprising:

accepting by a computer system a conditional offer, by a first employee assigned to work a first shift, to trade the first shift for another shift of another employee;

displaying by the computer system to other employees the conditional offer to trade the first shift for another shift;

receiving by the computer system a conditional acceptance from a second employee to trade a second shift of the second employee for the offered first shift of the first employee; and

confirming by the computer system a trade of the first shift of the first employee for the second shift of the second employee upon verification of criteria, or rejecting the trade of the first shift for the second shift upon non-verification of the criteria;

wherein the step of confirming includes checking by the computer system training data associated with the second employee in a training data database, and comparing the training data associated with the second employee with training requirements associated with a work area function to be performed on the first shift to verify that the second employee is qualified to perform the work area functions associated with the first shift;

wherein the step of confirming includes checking by the computer system a length of time between a time of receipt of the conditional acceptance and a time of occurrence of the first shift and the second shift

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against a minimum time period for trading shifts to verify that the length of time is not less than the minimum time period, providing a management user of the computer system with the capability to change the minimum time period;

additionally including displaying by the computer system to the second employee, upon confirmation of the trade, notifications relevant to the work area function of the first shift and the training data associated with the second employee;

additionally including indicating by the computer system to the first employee, upon confirmation of the trade, the confirmation of the trade; and

additionally including restricting by the computer system access to information about the trade of the first shift for the second shift upon confirmation of the trade.

Please add the following claims:

18. (New) A computer-implemented method for processing signals related to trading shifts between employees, the method comprising:

establishing a preliminary schedule of shifts on a computer system;

verifying by the computer system an identity of a first employee;

presenting to the first employee by the computer system the preliminary schedule of shifts;

accepting by the computer system a conditional offer from the first employee, assigned to work a first shift, to trade the first shift for another shift on the preliminary schedule of another employee;

displaying to other employees the conditional offer to trade the first shift for another shift;

verifying by the computer system an identity of a second employee;

receiving a conditional acceptance by the computer system from the second employee to trade a second shift of the second employee for the offered first shift of the first employee; and

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confirming a trade of the first shift of the first employee for the second shift of the second employee upon verification of criteria, or rejecting the trade of the first shift for the second shift upon non-verification of the criteria, the step of confirming including:

checking training data associated with the second employee in a training data database;

comparing by the computer system the training data associated with the second employee with training requirements associated with a work area function to be performed on the first shift to verify that the second employee is qualified to perform the work area functions associated with the first shift;

checking by the computer system a length of time between a time of receipt of the conditional acceptance and a time of occurrence of the first shift and the second shift against a minimum time period for trading shifts to verify that the length of time is not less than the minimum time period, providing a management user of the computer system with the capability to change the minimum time period;

transferring by the computer system, upon confirmation of the trade, the first shift from the first employee to the second employee and transferring the second shift from the second employee to the first employee;

displaying by the computer system to the second employee, upon confirmation of the trade, notifications relevant to the work area function of the first shift and the training data associated with the second employee;

indicating by the computer system to the first employee, upon confirmation of the trade, the confirmation of the trade; and

restricting by the computer system access to information about the trade of the first shift for the second shift upon confirmation of the trade.

19. (New) A computer-implemented method for processing signals related to trading shifts between employees, the method comprising:

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establishing a preliminary schedule of shifts on a computer system;

presenting to the first employee by the computer system the preliminary schedule of shifts;

accepting by the computer system a conditional offer from a first employee, assigned to work a first shift, to trade the first shift for another shift on the preliminary schedule of another employee;

displaying to other employees the conditional offer to trade the first shift for another shift;

receiving a conditional acceptance by the computer system from a second employee to trade a second shift of the second employee for the offered first shift of the first employee; and

confirming a trade of the first shift of the first employee for the second shift of the second employee upon verification of criteria, or rejecting the trade of the first shift for the second shift upon non-verification of the criteria; and

transferring by the computer system, upon confirmation of the trade, the first shift from the first employee to the second employee and transferring the second shift from the second employee to the first employee;

20. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 19 further comprising verifying by the computer system an identity of a first employee and verifying by the computer system an identity of a second employee.

21. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 19 wherein the step of confirming includes checking training data associated with the second employee in a training data database.

22. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 19 wherein the step of confirming includes comparing by the computer system the training data associated with the second employee with training requirements associated with a work area function to be performed on the

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first shift to verify that the second employee is qualified to perform the work area functions associated with the first shift.

23. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 19 wherein the step of confirming includes checking by the computer system a length of time between a time of receipt of the conditional acceptance and a time of occurrence of the first shift and the second shift against a minimum time period for trading shifts to verify that the length of time is not less than the minimum time period, providing a management user of the computer system with the capability to change the minimum time period.

24. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 19 wherein the step of confirming includes displaying by the computer system to the' second employee, upon confirmation of the trade, notifications relevant to the work area function of the first shift and the training data associated with the second employee.

25. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 19 wherein the step of confirming includes indicating by the computer system to the first employee, upon confirmation of the trade, the confirmation of the trade.

26. (New) The computer-implemented method of claim 19 wherein the step of confirming includes restricting by the computer system access to information about the trade of the first shift for the second shift upon confirmation of the trade.

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